

Remarks

The Office Action mailed January 21, 2004 has been carefully reviewed and the foregoing amendment has been made in consequence thereof.

Claims 1-4, 6-15, and 17-27 are now pending in this application. Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 18-20, 24, and 25 stand rejected. Claims 2, 3, 5, 8-11, 14, 16, 17, 21-23, 26, and 27 are objected to. Claims 5, 16, and 28-55 are canceled as explained below.

The present amendment is intended to place the application in condition for allowance by incorporating subject matter indicated as allowable in the Office Action into independent Claims 1 and 15, namely amending Claim 1 to include the recitations of allowable dependent Claim 5 and amending Claim 15 to include the recitations of allowable dependent Claim 16. Accordingly, Claims 5 and 16 have been canceled. Applicants wish to emphasize that the cancellation of Claims 5, 16, and 28-55 is without prejudice, and expressly reserve the right to file a continuation application or applications for further prosecution of the subject matter contained in these claims. Accordingly, Applicant expressly disavows any intention to surrender the subject matter of Claims 5, 16, and 28-55 by cancellation in the instant application, and reserves the right to prosecute these claims in future applications.

Additionally, the present amendment is intended to place the application in condition for allowance by canceling the non-elected Claims 28-55. Applicants wish to emphasize that the cancellation of Claims 28-55 is without prejudice, and Applicants reserve the right to file a divisional application or applications to prosecute the subject matter of these claims.

The rejection of Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 18-20, 24, and 25 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ruffin (U.S. Patent No. 6,219,654) in view of Conklin et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,141,653) (Conklin) and further in view of Guinta et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,161,101) (Guinta) is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 has been amended to include the recitations of allowable dependent Claim 5. Accordingly, Claim 1 is patentable over Ruffin in view of Conklin and further in view of Guinta.

Claims 4, 6, 7, 12, and 13 depend, directly or indirectly, from independent Claim 1 which is submitted to be in condition for allowance. When the recitations of Claims 4, 6, 7, 12, and 13 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that dependent Claims 4, 6, 7, 12, and 13 are also patentable over Ruffin in view of Conklin and further in view of Guinta.

Claim 15 has been amended to include the recitations of allowable dependent Claim 16. Accordingly, Claim 15 is patentable over Ruffin in view of Conklin and further in view of Guinta.

Claims 18-20, 24, and 25 depend, directly or indirectly, from independent Claim 15 which is submitted to be in condition for allowance. When the recitations of Claims 18-20, 24, and 25 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 15, Applicants respectfully submit that dependent Claims 18-20, 24, and 25 are also patentable over Ruffin in view of Conklin and further in view of Guinta.

For at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 18-20, 24, and 25 be withdrawn.

Claims 2, 3, 5, 8-11, 14, 16, 17, 21-23, 26, and 27 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants have amended Claim 1 to include the recitations of allowable dependent Claim 5, and have amended Claim 15 to include the recitations of allowable dependent Claim 16. Claims 5 and 16 have been canceled. Accordingly, Claims 2, 3, 8-11, 14, 17, 21-23, 26, and 27 are patentable.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, all the claims now active in the application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully Submitted,



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